

Striking a Balance: Sustainable Management of Our State Forests



January 22, 2009

What are the key issues in managing state-owned forestland?

- Balancing areas with active forestry and areas set aside from forestry (Forest Reserves)
- Balancing wildlife habitat, recreation, aesthetics and providing forest products and energy
- Diversifying predominately 80 year-old forest
- Involving the public in forest management planning and proposed harvests on state lands
- Balancing the above issues with evolving forest health, climate change and adaptation concerns

What laws provide forest management policy on state-owned forestland?

- Article 97: right to the conservation, development and utilization of the forest;
- MG L c. 21, Sec. 2F (2003): management plans consistent between recreation, resource protection, and sustainable forest management;
- MGL c. 132, Sec. 31 (1931): Reforest and develop State Forests;
- MGL c. 132, Sec. 40 (1943): Policy of the Commonwealth to provide a continuing and increasing supply of forest products for public consumption, farm use, and for the wood-using industries of the commonwealth.
- MGL c. 132A, Sec. 1F (2003): generally sets DCR duties to “perform forest management practices, reforestation, development of forest or wooded areas under the control of the DCR, making them in perpetuity income producing and improving such wooded areas.”
- MGL c. 132A, s. 2B (1958): Outside of forests but in state park or reservation areas, balance with the policy that areas are preserved in natural state, with no commercial activities, except for those essential for quiet enjoyment – DCR’s essential need for sustainable forest management has not been considered a commercial activity.

What other Legislative guidance shapes the program?

- Report of the Special Commission on Forest Management Practices established under St. 1995, c. 38, s. 341, as revived and continued under St. 1997, s. 43, s. 158A. The Commission, chaired by Senator Brewer, filed its Report with the Legislature in December 1998. Among other things, the Report's Conclusions recognize a balanced approach that the "twin goals of timber production and encouragement of bio-diversity must not be disconnected; they are interrelated and not mutually exclusive."
- In FY09, it is unlikely that DCR timber revenue will exceed \$400,000. However, in the FY09 budget (St. 2008, c. 182), the Legislature expected that DCR's timber sales at a minimum would exceed \$600,000 to fund one of the Bureau's programs. Line item 2800-2000: For the state licensed foresters program; provided, that the department of conservation and recreation may expend not more than \$600,000 from revenues collected from the sale of timber for materials, supplies, equipment and compensation of employees of the program; and provided further, that all expenditures from this item shall be subject to chapter 29 of the General Laws and recorded in the Massachusetts management accounting and reporting system...\$600,000

Forest Management Progress & Highlights

- Small Scale Reserves – DCR commitment to dedicate over 66,000 acres (over 38,000 dedicated to date)
- Large Scale Reserves – EEA commitment to dedicate 50,000 acres
- Forest inventories and forest type mapping completed for all 500,000 acres of state forest lands
- 1,800 miles of property boundaries marked and many miles eroded forest roads restored
- Detailed public involvement process in place since 2007 for timber harvesting, including online posting of all projects for comment & hosting frequent site visits.
- 8 Forest Forums held with diverse participation; 5 forest goals developed and supported by participants

Forest Management Progress & Highlights

Significant Improvements to State Forests have been made by:

- conducting rare species surveys
- preparing forest resource management plans
- repairing eroded roads
- conducting a comprehensive trail and road inventory and condition survey
- surveying and posting DCR property boundaries
- collecting forest and resource data.

“Green Certification” of State Forest Lands

- The independent annual audits by respected expert teams using sustainable forest management standards has improved our forest and land management practices;
- PA, NY, ME, MD, MI, MN, WI, IA & WA have some “green certified” state lands;
- The landscape requirements have helped EEA agencies share information and BMP’s and coordinate their forest management planning;
- The state’s certification has spurred interest in certification among private landowners;
- In the most recent audit, EEA was commended for meeting rigorous standards;
- In 2009, EEA is pursuing FSC recertification.

FSC Principles and Criteria for Forest Stewardship

1. Compliance with laws and FSC Principles
2. Tenure and use rights and responsibilities
3. Indigenous peoples' rights
4. Community relations and worker's rights
5. Benefits from the forest
6. Environmental impact
7. Management plan
8. Monitoring and assessment
9. Maintenance of High Conservation Value Forests
10. Plantations

Note: there are 56 separate FSC criteria defined beneath these principles – FSC Northeast Regional Standards – recently completed are among the highest standards in the world

Why cut trees on state land?

- Restore our predominately 80 year-old forest to one with greater diversity of sizes and ages to provide more diverse wildlife habitat and increase resilience to disturbances;
- Restore non-native and diseased or dying plantations to diverse native forests;
- Provide “in-kind services” as part of forest operations including payments to local towns, removal of invasive species, high-risk tree removal in recreation areas, repair of eroded forest roads, installation of gates and providing local wood products and energy;
- Serve as a model for good forestry on the 80% of MA forests that are privately owned; locally produced sustainable forest products are good for our rural economies and reducing MA carbon emissions.

Forest Cutting Policy

- In the past (over the last 103 years), forest management on DCR State Forest, Park, and Reservation forestlands has occurred in the absence of Natural or Forest Resource Management Plans.
- Until recently, no harvesting limitations or Sustainable Annual Harvest ceilings were in place.
- As of November 2008, DCR completed Forest Resource Management Plans for approximately one-half of the State's forestlands.
- These plans includes commitment to maximum level of forest management that can occur on an annual level.
- This harvesting ceiling that is well BELOW the Sustainable Annual Harvest level.
- Forestry management activities are consistent and comply with other state environmental statutes, such as Wetlands Protection Act and Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA).

Forest Resource Management Plans Approved To Date

- Southern Berkshire Forest Management District 42,965 acres
- Central Berkshire Forest Management District 31,251 acres
- Northern Berkshire Forest Management District 40,953 acres
- Western Connecticut Valley Forest
Management District 29,048 acres
144,217 acres

Forest Resource Management Plans in Progress

- DCR has begun developing plans for Eastern Connecticut Valley, Mid-State, Northeast, and Southeast forest management districts, including these activities:
 - Natural Resource Information Collection
 - Road & Trails Inventory
 - Forest Reserves Identification
 - Recreation Areas Inventory & Mapping

Northern Berkshire District Sustainable Annual Harvest Level Ceiling

Northern Berkshire District Forest	42,965 acres
Forest Reserve (No Active Management)	9,695 acres
Sustainable Annual Harvest Level	1,135 acres per year
Maximum Annual Allowable Harvest	450 acres per year

- In any given year no more that 450 acres within the Northern Berkshire District may be harvested representing approximately 1% of the forest land base. Management varies from thinning the forest to allow space for trees to grow to renewing the forest with young trees for future generations
- FY 2008, a total of 98 acres were harvested in this District.

Forest Management Activities

Harvesting Levels from 1980-2008

Period	Acres Treated**	Annual Average
1980-1989	15,175	1,517.5
1990-1999*	8,054	805.4
2000-2008	11,075	1,230.5

*During 1990-1999 forestry staff were conducting forest inventory for up to 3 years.

Annual Harvest Quantity

Total Standing Live Inventory (MBF)	Annual Gross Growth (MBF)	Annual Gross Mortality (MBF)	Annual Net Growth (MBF)	Annual Harvest 2003 to October 31, 2008 (MBF)
2,600,000,000	73,500,000	23,000,000	50,500,000	5,692,555

- This data compares annual harvest quantities to growth mortality for April 2003 – October 2008.
- During the last 5 years DCR averaged harvesting approximately 10% of the forest new growth each year.

Why have some forest management activities seemed more visible in recent times?

- Widespread and significant mortality in non-native red pine and Norway spruce plantations
- Violent ice and wind storms across the Commonwealth (notably December 2008 ice storm)
- As a result, the removal of larger numbers of trees is warranted to restore forest values and allow a new generation of trees to grow.

Revenue from Timber Harvesting

Year	Total Revenue	In Kind Services	MA Revenue	Returns to Towns
2002	\$328,889	\$4,400	\$299,822	\$24,667
2003	\$1,108,096	\$57,140	\$977,409	\$73,547
2004	\$999,453	\$93,665	\$845,290	\$60,498
2005	\$1,349,507	\$87,736	\$1,174,278	\$87,493
2006	\$1,006,225	\$110,584	\$836,143	\$59,498
2007	\$936,912	\$122,177	\$762,638	\$52,097
2008	\$964,603	\$178,157	\$738,157	\$48,289
Total	\$6,693,685	\$653,859	\$5,633,737	\$406,089

This chart depicts the revenue for DCR's forest management program from fiscal years 2002 – 2008.

What's Next?

- Public Review of Forest Resource Management Plans for 4 Districts (Ct River and eastward)
- Local Forest Reserves will be mapped and dedicated to complement the 50,000-acre large Forest Reserves
- More “conservation best mgt practices” will be completed for rare species (10 already done)
- More boundaries will be marked; roads repaired; invasive species treated, etc.;

What's Next?

- In 2009, DCR is convening a statewide public process about stewardship of DCR forests - Renewing a Commonwealth Vision for DCR Forests.
- Open, interactive dialogue with subject experts, stakeholders and the general public to assess the role of forest management in the overall stewardship of DCR forest lands.
- Anticipated Outcomes:
 - Enhanced common understanding about stewardship of DCR forest lands based on the productive sharing of information and varying points of view
 - Recommendations regarding forest stewardship that ensure a balanced integration of public values and ecological and social benefits for today and the future, consistent with widely accepted science.
- FRMPs will be adjusted as appropriate after completion of this process